

# Athens and Sparta

## Prepare to Read

### Objectives

In this section you will

1. Learn how people lived in ancient Sparta.
2. Discover some results of the Persian invasion of Greece.
3. Understand the conflicts that the Athenian empire faced.

### Taking Notes

As you read, look for ways in which Spartans differed from Athenians. Copy the chart below, and use it to record those differences.

Differences Between Spartans and Athenians	
Spartans	Athenians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Boys trained in military arts</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Boys educated in arts, history, and physical training</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>



### Target Reading Skill

**Identify Contrasts** When you contrast two peoples or cultures, you examine how they differ. In this section, you will read about the Spartan people. Although they had many of the same elements of Greek culture that the Athenians did, they differed in other ways. As you read, list the differences between Athens and Sparta. Record your findings in your Taking Notes chart.

### Key Terms

- **Sparta** (SPAHR tuh) *n.* a city-state in ancient Greece
- **helots** (HEL uts) *n.* In ancient Sparta, the term for slaves who were owned by the state
- **Peloponnesian War** (pel uh puh NEE shun wawr) *n.* (431–404 B.C.), a war fought between Athens and Sparta in ancient Greece; almost every other Greek city-state was involved in the war
- **plague** (playg) *n.* a widespread disease
- **blockade** (blah KAYD) *n.* an action taken to isolate the enemy and cut off its supplies



A Spartan warrior

The boy stood still and straight beside his companions as their trainer approached. “You,” the trainer barked, “Are you sick? Don’t think you’ll get out of sword practice—and why are you holding your belly? Hiding something?”

The trainer gave the boy’s cloak a sharp tug. It fell to the ground, freeing a fox that streaked off into the underbrush. The boy fell to the ground. His cloak was blood red. His side was shredded with deep cuts and bites. The boy had stolen the fox for his dinner. Hidden beneath the cloak, the fox had clawed and bit him.

Later, the boy died from his wounds. He had endured terrible pain without giving any sign of his distress. To the Spartans, this was the sign of true character.

This Spartan story of the boy and the fox may be true, or it might be just a legend. However, it tells us much about the people of Sparta.

## Living in Sparta

Life in Athens was free and open, but life for the citizens of Sparta was just the opposite. Life in Sparta was harsh and even cruel. The Spartans themselves were tough, silent, and grim. Sparta's army easily equaled that of Athens' in the 400s B.C. However, Sparta never came close to equaling Athens' other achievements.

In its early days, Sparta was similar to other Greek cities. Then, in the 600s B.C., wars inside and outside the city led to changes in the government and the way people lived. The changes turned Sparta into a powerful war machine. The city-state established one basic rule: Always put the city's needs above your own.

Early in its history, the Spartans conquered the land around their city. They turned the conquered people into helots, or slaves owned by the city-state of Sparta. Helots did all the farm work on the land owned by Spartan citizens. This system left the Spartans free to wage war. However, the helots far outnumbered the Spartans. Living in fear of a helot revolt, the Spartans turned their city into an armed camp. They treated the helots very harshly.

**Reading Check** What type of people were the Spartans?

Sparta lies in a fertile valley with mountains on three sides. Sparta spent its money and energy on its army instead of fine buildings. Today, few ruins remain to tell us about this important city-state.

## Growing Up in Sparta

The life of every Spartan was in the hands of the government from birth. Only the healthiest children were raised because the Spartans wanted only the healthiest people in their city.

**Growing Up Male** Training began early. At seven, a Spartan boy left his home to live in barracks with other boys. His training continued for the next 13 years.

By the age of 12, a boy had spent long hours practicing with swords and spears. He had only one cloak and a thin mat to sleep on. He could hardly live on the small amount of food he was given, so he was urged to steal. The Spartans thought that a boy who learned to steal would know how to live off the land during a war. However, if the boy were caught stealing, he was severely punished. Boys were expected to bear pain, hardship, and punishment in silence. Through this rigid discipline, Spartan youths became excellent soldiers.

When he became 20, a young man officially became a soldier. Men remained soldiers until their sixtieth birthdays. At the age of 30, a man was able to take his place in the assembly, a council consisting of all the male citizens born in Sparta. As in Athens, only non-slave males were considered citizens in Sparta. The council approved the decisions made by the council of elders who, in turn, acted as advisors to the king.



Helmet worn by Greek soldiers

Spartan soldiers were trained to be excellent warriors. Many armies suffered defeat at the hands of Spartan fighting forces.



**Growing Up Female** Like the boys, girls also trained and competed in wrestling and spear throwing. No one expected girls to become soldiers. However, Spartans did believe that girls who grew up strong and healthy would have strong, healthy children. Therefore, unlike other Greek women, Spartan women were trained to exercise and build up their bodies.

Spartan women had a somewhat better life than women in other Greek city-states. They were allowed to own land and even take some part in business. However, like their Athenian sisters, they had to obey the males—the fathers, husbands, or brothers—in their lives. Because the men were so involved in military matters, some Spartan women took on larger responsibilities, such as the running of their farms or estates.

**Spartan Attitudes** The Spartans did not mingle with other Greeks. They were not allowed to travel. They looked down on the desire for wealth and on those engaged in trade. They lacked the interest in the arts that the Athenians and some other Greeks cultivated. However, Spartan warriors were known for their skill and bravery. The Spartan fighting force played a key role in the Greek wars against the Persians, a people who lived across the Aegean Sea, east of Greece.

**✓ Reading Check** What was the Spartan attitude about trade?



**Identify Contrasts**

Contrast the life of Spartan women to that of Athenian women. Enter your findings on your Taking Notes chart.



## Links Across

### Time

**The Legend of the Marathon**  
Stories say that after the battle at Marathon, the Athenians sent their fastest runner to tell the people of Athens of the victory. His chest heaving, the runner covered the distance to the city and shouted to the people "Rejoice! We have won." Then he dropped dead. The actual distance from Marathon to Athens is about 25 miles (40 km). Today's marathon races of 26.2 miles (42 km) honor this legend.

### Timeline Skills

The timeline below covers events that occurred during Classical Greece, an era that lasted from about 500 B.C. to 323 B.C. **Identify** What event occurred near the end of the Persian Wars? **Analyze** After which war did Athens surrender to Sparta?

## The Persians Invade

Much of Greek history tells of wars the Greeks fought among themselves. Near the beginning of the 400s B.C., a new threat loomed—the growing might of Persia. The Greeks put aside their differences and joined forces to defend their peninsula.

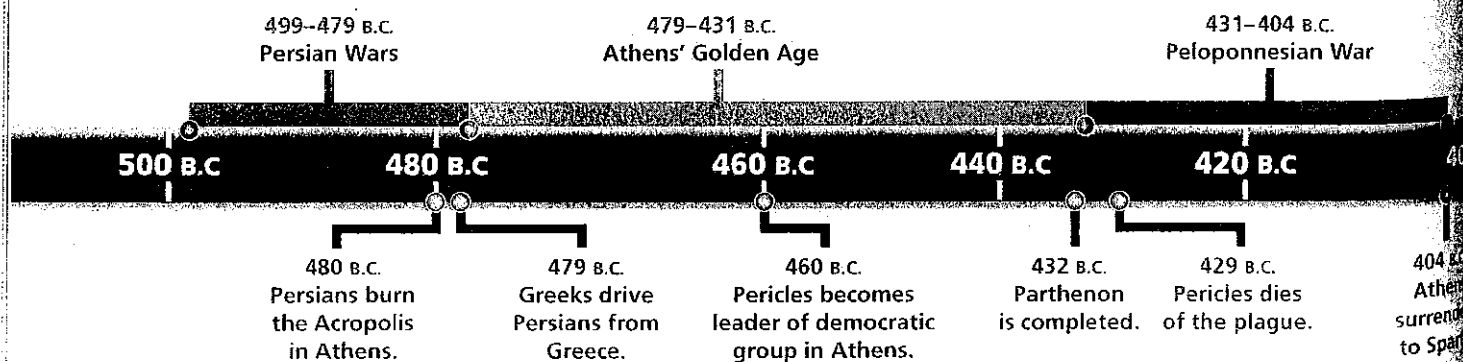
**The Expanding Persian Empire** Cyrus the Great had founded the Persian Empire in the mid-500s B.C. Cyrus and the rulers who followed him extended the original empire. By 520 B.C., the Persians had gained control of the Greek colonies on the west coast of Asia Minor.

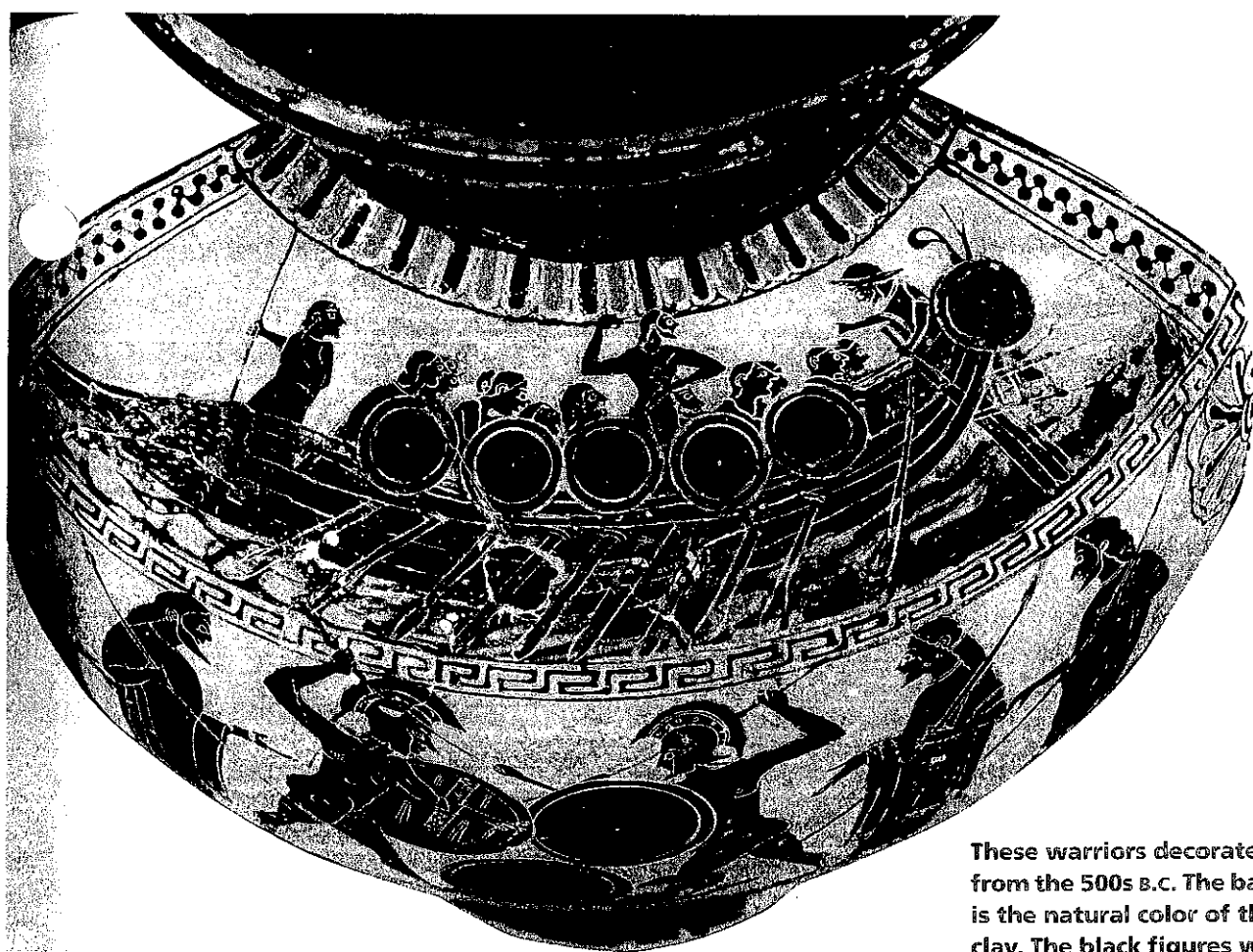
**Battle at Marathon** In the fall of 490 B.C., a force including thousands of Persians landed in Greece. The Persian soldiers gathered at Marathon (MAR uh thahn), about 25 miles (40 km) north of Athens. The Athenians hastily put together a small army. However, the Persians outnumbered them by at least two to one. For several days, the armies stared tensely at each other across the plain of Marathon.

Then, without warning, the Athenians rushed the Persians, who were overwhelmed by the furious attack. By one account, at the end of the battle the Athenians had killed 6,400 Persians but had lost only 192 soldiers themselves. The Persian losses may have been exaggerated. However, it is true that in a short time this tiny state had defeated the giant that had come to destroy it.

✓ **Reading Check** What happened during the battle at Marathon?

## Classical Greece





These warriors decorate a vase from the 500s B.C. The background is the natural color of the baked clay. The black figures were made by using a glossy black pigment.

## Conflict and the Athenian Empire

More battles with Persia followed. As a common enemy, Persia distracted the Greek city-states from fighting one another. Briefly united, Greece drove away the Persians.

Their victory over the Persians increased the Greeks' sense of their own importance. They believed that the gods had favored them and had therefore influenced the outcome of the wars.

Athens emerged from the war as the most powerful city-state in Greece. Its influence spread over much of eastern Greece. Athens joined other city-states in the Delian League (DEE lee un leeg), named after the island of Delos (DEE lahs), where the league's treasury was kept. In time, however, these cities were treated more like subjects of Athens and less like allies. Athens came to dominate the league and used it to create its own empire.

Ironically, while Athens was expanding its empire and forcing other city-states to bow to its will, Athens came to champion political freedom at home. Athens did support democratic groups within the other city-states, but its focus was on freedom for its own people. The years following the Persian Wars were the Golden Age of Athens that you read about in Chapter 6.

### Citizen Heroes

#### Working Together

In one of the wars against the Persians, some 6,000 Greeks had to defend a mountain pass leading into southern Greece. They faced nearly 200,000 Persians. Most of the Greeks retreated, but 300 Spartan soldiers stood their ground. All of them died in the battle. They didn't hold back the Persians, but they earned undying praise for their brave sacrifice.

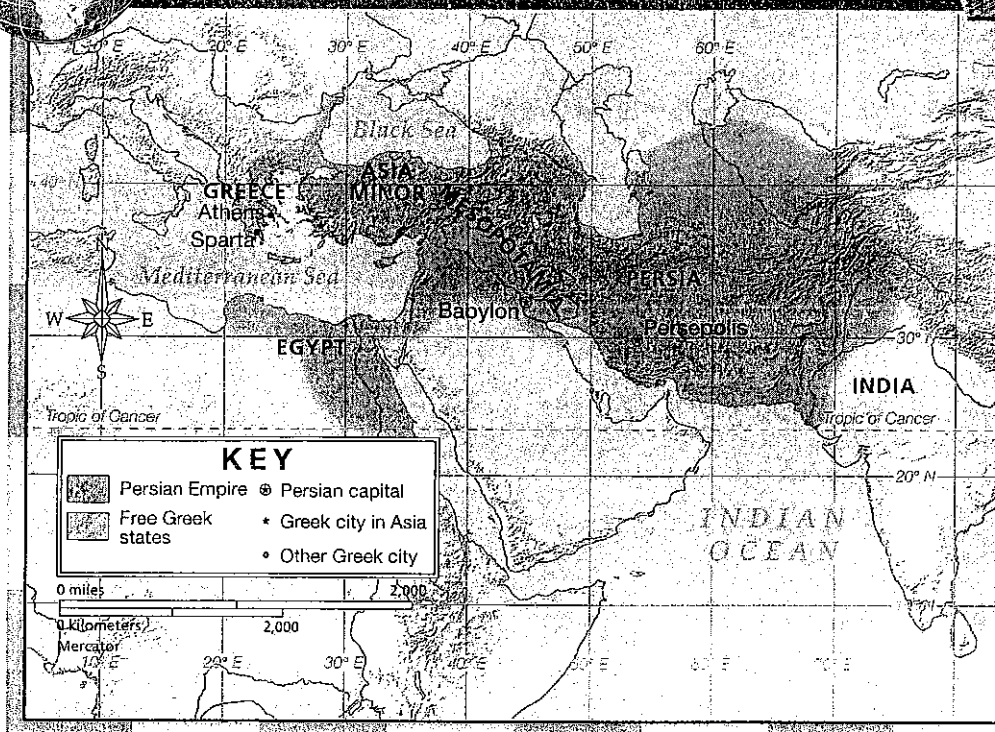
**Reading Check** Why did Greeks believe they had won their wars with Persia?





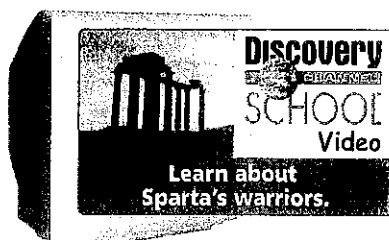
## Greece and the Persian Empire

## MAP MASTER Skills Activity



**Movement** By the early 400s B.C., the Persian Empire had spread from India to just north of the Greek mainland. **Identify** What cities were Persian capitals? **Infer** What advantage would the Persians gain from winning control over Greece?

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map skills practice.



## Sparta and Athens at War

Athens may have been a democracy at home, but it began to act unfairly toward other city-states. At first, allies of Athens had paid tribute to the city-state for protection, in case the Persians caused more trouble. Later, Athens moved the treasury from Delos to Athens and used the money that was supposed to help defend its allies to build the Parthenon and to finance other projects.

**The Peloponnesian War** The people of these city-states began to fear and resent Athens' power. They looked to Sparta, which had not joined the alliance, to protect them. To counter the Delian League, Sparta formed the Peloponnesian League, named after Peloponnesus, the southern Greek peninsula where Sparta was located. In 431 B.C., Sparta and its allies fought against Athens and its allies. Thus began the Peloponnesian War.

Even though Athens had a fine navy and more wealth than the other city-states, its geography was a great disadvantage in the war. Sparta, located inland, could not be attacked from the sea. However, Sparta had only to march north to attack Athens by land.

Greek warrior figurine



When Sparta invaded Athens, the statesman Pericles, whom you read about in Chapter 6, let the people from the surrounding countryside move inside the city walls. The overcrowded conditions led to a plague, or widespread disease. By the time the plague ended five years later, about one third of the people of Athens had died from it. Among the dead was Pericles. The power struggles of those who sought to take Pericles' place also undermined the city's government.

**The Fall of Athens** Athens never recovered from its losses during the plague. To make matters worse, Sparta allied itself to its former common enemy to have the advantage of the Persian navy. In 405 B.C., with their new allies, the Spartans staged a blockade, an action taken to isolate the enemy and cut off its supplies. The Spartans surrounded and closed the harbor where Athens received food shipments. Starving and beaten, the Athenians surrendered in 404 B.C.

The victorious Spartans knocked down the walls of Athens. They destroyed its navy and decimated its empire. Athens never again dominated the Greek world.

**✓ Reading Check** What did Greek city-states do to overcome oppression by Athens?

### Athens Defeated

Shields and spears, such as those carried by the warriors below, could not spare the Athenians from the plague. *Analyze* What factors contributed to the fall of Athens?



## Section 2 Assessment

### Key Terms

Review the key terms listed at the beginning of this section. Use each term in a sentence that explains its meaning.

### Target Reading Skill

Look at the chart you made of the differences between the Spartans and the Athenians. Name one of the differences that led to the outcome of the Peloponnesian War.

### Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. (a) **Recall** Describe what life was like for boys living in Sparta.
- (b) **Explain** What was the Spartan attitude toward wealth?

(c) **Draw Inferences** How did the Spartans' attitude toward wealth affect their trade and travel?

2. (a) **Describe** How did the Greeks overcome the Persian invasion?

(b) **Evaluate Information** What was at stake for the people of Athens at the Battle of Marathon?

(c) **Predict** How might the history of Greece have changed if the Persians had succeeded at Marathon?

3. (a) **Recall** What happened to the Greeks' attitude about themselves after defeating the Persians?

(b) **Summarize** How did the Athenian empire develop after its victory over Persia?

### (c) Synthesize Information

How did Athens play a part in its own downfall?

### Writing Activity

Reread the story that begins this section. From a trainer's point of view, write a report that explains the event to other Spartan officers.

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